

How is the ACT Composite Score Related to the Likelihood that a Student will Persist in College?

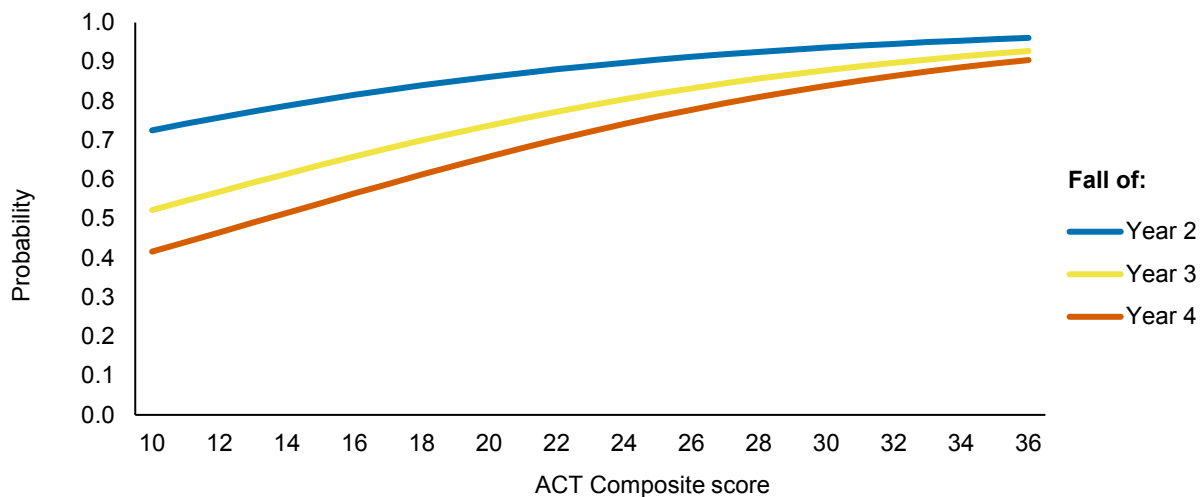
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As a student's ACT® Composite score increased, the student's chances of persisting in college through year 4 also increased for ACT-tested 2010 high school graduates who immediately enrolled in a postsecondary institution in fall 2010 (Figure 1). Moreover, larger changes in attrition occurred over time for students with lower scores.

For example, a student with an ACT Composite score of 28 had a 93% chance of re-enrolling in any postsecondary institution in year 2 (fall 2011), an 86% chance in year 3 (fall 2012), and an 81% chance in year 4 (fall 2013). In comparison, the corresponding chances of re-enrollment for a student with an ACT Composite score of 18 were 84% in year 2, 70% in year 3, and 61% in year 4.

Findings from these analyses highlight the positive effect that academic achievement has on persisting in college.¹ There are other student characteristics such as social and emotional learning skills that are also related to persisting in college (e.g., see the 2018 Higher Education Research Digest).

Figure 1. Likelihood of Persisting in any College by ACT Composite Score.²



1. A companion piece describing the relationship between ACT Composite score and a student's chances of completing a college degree is available at <https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/R1730-degree-completion-2018-11.pdf>.

2. Based on nearly 1.08 million ACT-tested 2010 high school graduates who enrolled in a postsecondary institution in fall 2010. Students' enrollment and degree information was obtained from the National Student Clearinghouse. Hierarchical logistic regression models with random intercepts were used to estimate students' chances of persisting in college while statistically controlling for the initial institution attended. The fixed effect parameter estimates for the intercept and slope of ACT Composite score were 0.1123 and 0.0858 at year 2, -0.8575 and 0.0946 at year 3, and -1.3322 and 0.0994 at year 4. The corresponding variance estimates for the random intercepts were 0.7228, 0.7427, and 0.7478, respectively.



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